

1996

Context and Factors in Acquiring Literacy Skills: A Case Study of Two Adult Literacy Classes in Namibia

Walter Naftalie Kahivere

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Kahivere, Walter Naftalie, "Context and Factors in Acquiring Literacy Skills: A Case Study of Two Adult Literacy Classes in Namibia" (1996). *Master's Capstone Projects*. 149.

Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones/149

This Open Access Capstone is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Education at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

**CONTEXT AND FACTORS IN ACQUIRING LITERACY SKILLS:
A CASE STUDY OF TWO ADULT LITERACY CLASSES IN NAMIBIA**

A Thesis Presented

by

WALTER NAFTALIE KAHIVERE

**Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts, Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of**

MASTER OF EDUCATION

May 1996

Education Policy Research and Administration (EPRA)

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the following people:

Joseph, Johanna and Joseph (jr.) George "Tjari" Kahivere

Ida and Joshua Kamberipa

Mercia Magrietha and Walter Charles "Grant" Kahivere

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In an undertaking such as this, there are so many people who make their contribution in one way or another. I find it appropriate to start my vote of thanks by thanking all the Oshikwanyama and the Khoekhoegowab speaking learners who spent so many nights with me in the classes. They have enriched my life in so many ways. This project could not have materialized without their contributions.

To Anna !Haoses and Mirjam Mwafufya, the two teachers of the researched classes, I would also like to say; "*Onda pandula Unene*"⁷.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Elias !Nanuseb, the Acting Regional Literacy Officer for the Windhoek Region. I wish Elizabeth Imene and Taracky M. Namupala, the two District Literacy Organizers who introduced me to the classes, all the best in their noble work.

The staff of the Directorate of Adult Basic Education, or rather my colleagues, deserve a special vote of thanks for sharing with me their knowledge about the program. Let me single out the Under Secretary of Adult and Continuing Education, Libraries, Arts and Culture (ACELAC), Mr. Justin Ellis and the Director of the Directorate of Adult Basic Education (DABE), Mrs. Canner Kalimba for their strong support and leadership. Mr. John Boois, an education officer and a language expert, helped me a lot with the translation from khoekhoegowab to English. I thank him a lot for his assistance in this regard.

⁷I thank you very much' in Oshikwanyama

I'm lacking words to thank USAID, World Education and New TransCentury Foundation for making it possible for me to do a Master's Degree in the United States of America. This opportunity touched and influenced my life in so many ways.

I would like to thank all the community members of the Center for International Education (CIE) for their contribution towards the advancement of my career. Let me thank Prof. George Urch, a faculty member of CIE, for his support and advice. Surely, many thanks will go to my adviser, Prof. Robert "Bob" Miltz, who does not preach participatory approach but practices it.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Kahivere family for their love, support and understanding. I regard myself lucky to be part of such a great family!

To God be the glory!

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted over a period of three and a half months in two Stage One literacy classes. The main aim of the study was to determine whether the National Literacy Program in Namibia is addressing the specific literacy needs of these two classes. The case study covers 35 learners in Windhoek.

The study concluded that some learning did take place in the classes, if the results of final examination is something to go by. The attendance and dedication of the learners and the promoters was outstanding.

However, this study noted that the learners came with a broader expectation to the class, than what the program had to offer. They did not only come to the class to learn how to read, write and count. They wanted to learn specific literacy skills that would help them to cope with specific situation in their daily lives. They also felt that they had something to contribute to the program, instead of only receiving.

The teachers, who received a three week training course, used mostly the so-called “lecture method” to teach the primers. More than half of the content in the two primers deals with rural area issues. These learners found them inappropriate in their urban situation.

This study concluded that the learners and teachers should be given more ownership and responsibility in the creation of text. This does not mean that the primers should be abolished. It only means that irrelevant parts could be supplemented with learner-generated and other existing materials.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATION -----	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS-----	iii
ABSTRACT -----	v
CHAPTER 1	
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY-----	1
1.1 Background information -----	1
1.2 Introduction to the research study -----	4
1.2.1 Problem Statement-----	5
1.2.2 Purpose of The Study-----	5
1.2.3 Research Questions -----	5
1.2.4 Research Design -----	6
1.2.5 Methodology-----	6
1.2.5.1 Review of literacy-----	6
1.2.5.2 Interview -----	7
1.2.5.4 Action Oriented-Research -----	7
1.2.5.5 Story telling technique -----	7
CHAPTER 2	
LITERATURE REVIEW -----	8
2.1 Literature review on Literacy in Namibia-----	8
2.1.1 Defining literacy -----	8
2.1.2 Languages-----	9
2.1.3 Ideology -----	9

2.1.4 Current efforts -----	10
2.1.4.1 NLPN performance-----	10
2.1.4.2 Learning and instructional materials -----	11
2.1.4.3 Training of DLOs and promoters -----	12
2.1.4.4 Fact-finding missions -----	13
2.1.4.5 Assessment and certification-----	14
2.1.4.6 Overall Evaluation of NLPN-----	15
2.2 Theoretical framework -----	16
"Context and Factors in Acquiring Literacy Skills"-----	16
2.2.1 Definition of literacy -----	16
2.2.3 Purpose of literacy -----	17
2.2.4 Strategies to provide literacy -----	18
2.2.5 Context and factors of Acquiring Literacy Skills-----	19
 CHAPTER 3	
 THE STUDY -----	21
3.1 Selection of the groups -----	21
3.2 Constraints -----	22
3.2.1 Languages-----	22
3.2.2 Time Frame-----	22
3.2.3 Attendance-----	23
3.2.4 Measuring learning-----	23
3.3 Oshikwanyama literacy class-----	23
3.3.1 Hakahana or Hainyeko -----	23
3.3.2 Composition of the class -----	24
3.3.3 Learning Place -----	24
3.3.4 Time -----	25
3.3.5 Attendance -----	26
3.3.6 The promoter -----	28
3.3.7 Class activities-----	28
3.3.8 Mobilization -----	29

3.4 Khoekhoegowab literacy class	29
3.4.1 Composition of the class	29
3.4.2 Learning Place	31
3.4.3 Time	32
3.4.4 Class activities	32
3.4.5 The promoter	33
3.4.6 Mobilization	33
3.5 Voices of the learners	33
3.6 Coping with a literate society	36
3.6.1 Stories from learners experiences	36
3.6.2 Pre-testing Posters	39
3.6.2.1 Posters with health messages	39
3.6.2.2 Posters with shopping messages	42
3.6.2.3 Poster of political leaders	42
3.7 Literacy materials	43
3.7.1 General Comments	43
3.7.2 Content of the primers	44
3.7.2.1 Oshikwanyama primer	44
3.7.2.2. The Khoekhoegowab primer	45
3.7.3 Short comings with the primers	47

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	49
4.1 Attendance of classes	49
4.2 Communication between the DLOs and the Promoters	50
4.3 Teaching methodology	51
4.4 Classroom arrangement	55
4.5 Literacy Materials	56
4.5.1 Additions to the primers	56
4.5.2 Writing Exercise	57
4.5.3 The use of picture code	59
4.5.4 Revising NLPN materials to attract men	60
4.5.5 Supplementary materials for Stage 1	60

4.6 The impact of literacy on the learners-----	61
4.7 Revisiting the testing issue -----	62
4.8 Literacy academic year-----	64
4.9 NLPN goal of 80% literacy by the year 2000?-----	65
4.10 SUMMARY -----	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY -----	68
APPENDICES-----	70

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background information

The Republic of Namibia is situated in the south western part of Africa. It shares borders with Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. Namibia is 823 144 square meters and has a population of 1 409 920⁸, which gives it a population density of 1.7 per square km. There are 28% of all Namibians who live in urban settings, while 72% live in the rural area (1991 Census).

Like many so called "developing" countries, Namibia inherited at its independence in 1990 an educational system which did not provide equal educational opportunities for all its citizens. This was done in the form of eleven ethnic-oriented educational systems, which was a direct result of the South African Apartheid policy.

The situation of inadequate provision of education is described by Serfontein, a South African historian, that the education in Namibia up to 1973 was as follows:

"There are only seven schools in Territory where secondary education can be obtained...A breakdown of distribution of pupils by grade shows that, of all children who attend school, 75 per cent drop out in the first three years of primary education. Of African school children 97,87 per cent leave school before Standard 6⁹... In 1973 there were only 44 African pupils in Standard 10...One of the most alarming features of education for 'non-Whites' is the appallingly low standard of education of the teachers: 62 per cent have been educated to Junior Certificate or Standard 6, and 36 per cent have no matriculation or professional qualifications... One of the important statistic that is virtually unobtainable is

⁸723 593 females + 686 327 males

⁹Standard 6 = Grade 8

the annual amount spent per child of the various racial groups. For South Africa, the figure for school attendance during 1973-1974 was: Whites R445,14¹⁰; Coloreds R109,88 and Africans in the White areas R28,56" (Serfontein J.H.P. 1976).

The majority of Namibians was neglected and marginalized as far as education is concerned. After the independence of Namibia, the newly established Ministry of Education and Culture¹¹ (MEC) employed various efforts to address this situation. This document will only cover relevant aspects of those which relate to its theme.

MEC created a Directorate of Adult Basic Education (DABE) to provide basic education for adults, people who are 15 years old and older. DABE established in 1992 The National Literacy Program in Namibia (NLPN), a Large Scale Literacy Program, to provide literacy in mother tongue and English.

This was done after consultative studies on past experiences of adult literacy and possible future strategies, from November 1990 - March 1991. Then a national seminar with major partners was held to produce "The Guide to the National Literacy Program in Namibia." This guide serves as a "policy and work plan" indicator for the program.

The main goal of NLPN was to achieve an adult literacy rate of 80% by the year 2000 (Guide to the NLPN, 1992; Overall Evaluation, 1995).

The 1991 Census revealed that 65% adults are literate. It used academic education attained and self-reporting as indicators to determine if a person was literate or not. If an adult

¹⁰US \$1 = R3.93 (South African Rand) according to SAPA report of March 1996

¹¹The Ministry responsible for adult basic education is known as the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture since 1995. MEC referring in this paper to this Ministry.

responded to have less than four years of formal school experience or say the he/ she cannot read and write, then the respondent was classified as illiterate.

A Survey of Adult Learners' Literacy skills and Education was carried out in 1994 by NLPN to verify the literacy-level-information of the 1991 census. It tested adults, in two regions, to see if they can read and write. The Survey of Adults Learners' report came to the following conclusions:

"The most important conclusion of the survey for the purpose was to state that there is a strong positive relationship in both regions between formal education on the one hand, and literacy and numeric abilities, on the other. The survey suggest that the 'education proxy' of a minimum of four years of schooling can be used to sort out those who are probably already literate from those who are not. It does, however, wrongly classify some people as illiterate and also, wrongly, some people as literate. It is possible that these two effects more or less cancel each other out." (A Survey on Adult Learners, August 1994).

NLPN has received political support from its highest body, the National Assembly (NA). This came about when all the political parties in the NA adopted an Act that regards basic education as a right for all Namibians, including adults. NLPN's mission is described by the Hon. President of the Republic of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, as:

"...a person is not stupid or ignorant because he or she is illiterate. All adults have acquired many experiences on which we must build...we must work to involve both men and women in this Program, aware of their roles in society... literacy programs should also give impetus to other programs of adult education, agricultural extension, primary health care, and so on. In this way we shall become not just a literate nation but an educated nation." (Guide to the NLPN, 1992).

The Directorate of Adult Basic Education has established structures at both Head Office and Regional Office level to accomplish this vision. DABE offers a three level literacy program. Each level or stage takes one year to complete. Stage 1 is introducing reading and writing in mother tongue. This has been introduced in ten local languages to provide adults with an

opportunity to learn literacy first through their own language. The next stage is focusing on functional literacy in mother tongue, while Stage three introduces adults to communicative English. Each Stage has an arithmetic component. DABE is currently planning to expand its operational ground to provide a post-literacy program.

NLPN inherited a vast experience and materials from the Namibian Extension Unit Educational Program, that was run by the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO¹²) in Angola and Zambia, during the liberation struggle for independence.

1.2 Introduction to the research study

This research project was conducted over a period of three and a half months in Windhoek, the capital city of the Republic of Namibia. It focused on the dynamics of acquiring literacy skills in two Stage 1 classes. The researcher attended each class twice a week for two hours, during each visit.

This project describes the various efforts of NLPN in addressing the literacy issue, though the main focus will fall on the particular two researched classes. The following aspects will get prominent coverage; teaching methodology, role of learners, relevance of primers, suitability of venue, composition of class, attendance and class activities. Main conclusions and their implications will then be discussed. These recommendations are not "blue prints" but understandings to stimulate debate on this issue.

¹²The ruling party of Namibia since 1990.

1.2.1 Problem Statement

Is the literacy curriculum addressing the specific literacy needs of adult learners in the classes?

1.2.2 Purpose of The Study

The progress and setbacks that the learners demonstrated towards achieving literacy skills form an important part of this project. This study would therefore seek to meet the following objectives:

- ◆ to describe the historical background of illiteracy in Namibia;
- ◆ to describe the learning progress of two adult literacy groups;
- ◆ to explain how and why the adult learners joined the literacy program;
- ◆ to state the uses and relevance of the literacy materials to these learners;
- ◆ to tell the various needs and uses of literacy in their daily life;
- ◆ to develop a learner-generated book.

1.2.3 Research Questions

These objectives can only be met if the study comes to some understanding of the problem stated in 2.1. The next questions are breaking the leading question in more specific parts:

- ◆ what is the educational background of these adult learners?
- ◆ in what way are their daily lives affected by literacy?
- ◆ how do they perform in reading and writing over a period of three months?
- ◆ what are the constraints and progress they experience on their road towards achieving literacy skills?
- ◆ in what way are the literacy materials useful to the learners?

- ◆ what recommendation can the researcher make based on these findings?

1.2.4 Research Design

The research will study these components:

- ◆ historical background of literacy in Namibia
- ◆ the concept of literacy (according to NLPN)
- ◆ current efforts to “eradicate” illiteracy;
- ◆ selecting two Stage 1 literacy groups;
- ◆ studying these groups;
- ◆ make diagnostic assessment at the beginning, middle and end of the period;
- ◆ focus on how the materials are used and understood by promoters and learners.

1.2.5 Methodology

The researcher conducted a qualitative research on both classes.

1.2.5.1 Review of literacy

The researcher conducted a literature review on NLPN materials. It included various documents like reports, statistics, prior studies, some literacy materials, instruments, enrollment and attendance registers, policy and test results were also used to verify information. This was done in Namibia.

Another component of the literature review covered a library search on "Context and Factors in acquiring literacy skills". This part was completed at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (USA).

1.2.5.2 Interview

Interviews were conducted with the literacy learners, drop outs, two promoters, two District Literacy Organizers (DLOs), one Regional Literacy Officer (RLO) and some staff members of DABE at Head Office.

1.2.5.3 Observation

The role of the learners in the class, and that of the promoters, was observed and discussions were held to verify the data collected.

1.2.5.4 Action Oriented-Research

The researcher produced a learner-generated book from autobiographies, songs, stories, poems and issues that learners wanted to have documented. A copy of this book, "*Life is Not So Easy*", was given to each learner as an appreciation for their contribution towards the research project. This method also provided information on their writing ability.

1.2.5.5 Story telling technique

The researcher also used the story telling technique as an inquiry method. This was done when the learners were expected to talk about events which happened to them where they needed to apply some literacy skills.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature review on Literacy in Namibia

2.1.1 Defining literacy

There is no official definition of literacy in the Guide stipulated, apart from a statement saying that, "... persons who are wholly illiterate will commence in their mother tongue at stage 1" (Guide to the National Literacy Program in Namibia, 1992). This brings up the issue of what NLPN regard "literacy" to be.

The Guide also states that Stage 1 is aiming at acquiring literacy and basic numeric in mother tongues. But what is meant by "literacy"? A curriculum Guide for the National Literacy Program in Namibia states,

"Stage one is an introductory stage for those learners who have never had any formal education. It is also intended for those who dropped out of the school system in the early primary classes and have relapsed into illiteracy. By the end of this stage the content covered will enable the learners to read and write simple words and the numbers correctly. Stage one is equivalent to Grade one of the Formal Education system." (Curriculum Guide, 1993).

In 1994, NLPN staff together with staff of the University of Namibia (UNAM) conducted a small survey in Ondangwa and Windhoek and came to the conclusion that at least four years of schooling is "normally" required for a person to have acquired sustainable and basic mother tongue literacy skills (Adult Literacy in Ondangwa and Windhoek, 1994).

The purpose of literacy, according to NLPN materials, is explained best by the Hon. Dr. M.P. Tjitendero¹³, at an opening national seminar on literacy in May 1991, when he said,

"Literate persons are able to cope with the modern world. A person who cannot read a sign, or a medicine bottle, or a fertilizer bag- let alone a text book- is going to experience problems. The person who cannot read or write a letter, or manage a bank account, faces many embarrassing situations. With technology advancing every day, those who cannot handle reading, writing, arithmetic- and they are usually the poorest in society- are going to find themselves increasingly at a disadvantage." (Tjitendero's Opening Speech, May 1991)

2.1.2 Languages

Namibia introduced literacy at Stage 1 in mother tongue in the following languages: Otjiherero, Khoekhoegowab, Oshindonga, Oshikwanyama, Silozi, Rugciriku, Rukwangali, Ju/"hoan, Setswana, Thimbukushu, Rukwangali and Afrikaans.

This means that primers in all these languages have been developed, except for Setswana where NLPN is using materials from Botswana. The provision of literacy in so many languages is an expensive undertaking, but the government of Namibia made this possible through its own efforts and assistance from various donors and partners.

2.1.3 Ideology

No literacy program operates on a "neutral" ground, each one has a specific ideology or a combination of some sort. Stage 1 literacy classes are using the phonics approach to prepare learners for functional literacy. The following points in the Stage 1 Promoter's Handbook states the importance of literacy according to the program:

¹³He is the speaker of the House (National Assembly)

- "Literacy enables people to participate more fully in the development of the nation and to be self-reliant critical, independent and creative.
- By knowing how to read, we can find out what is happening in the world, and increase our knowledge of things important to us.
- We can read medical prescriptions, danger signs, safety instructions etc.
- We'll have no more problems filling in forms or writing letters.
- It is the duty of all of us to help other people learn how to read and write.
- We'll be able to help our children to learn how to read and write and with their school work.
- We shall have more choices when looking for a chance of promotion.
- If we know more about numbers we shall have fewer problems when dealing with money.
- Once we can read and write we can take further courses.
- We feel more confident to participate in decision-making if we are able to read about the matters under discussion." (Promoter's Handbook, 1993).

The Guide is viewing "lifelong learning" and "reconciliation" as important ideologies that it has adopted, but this is not reflected in the literacy materials. Prof. H.S. Bhola, in his sub-study which he conducted in Namibia on NLPN, argues that:

"Reconciliation is already a most important ideological commitment of the Namibian state. However, while the ideal of reconciliation is ever present in people's minds, and the feeling of uneasy reconciliation is part of existential reality in the lives of people. Reconciliation is not part of the public discourse in the general society, nor a part of the instructional discourse within the NLPN. To give reconciliation a chance, it should be placed within the larger perspective of peace and prosperity; and it must become a part of the NLPN planning, its curriculum, of texts in training and reading materials" (Bhola, 1995).

2.1.4 Current efforts

2.1.4.1 NLPN performance

An estimated number of 15 000 learners was recruited for Stage 1 in July 1992 of which 78% were women. The final test in July 1993 was taken by 8 439 learners of whom 6 753 (80%) passed (1992/ 1993 NLPN Statistics, 1993 Annual Report).

In September 5, 1992 NLPN was officially launched by the Right Prime Minister, Hage Geingob, which demonstrated the government's commitment to provide basic education for all Namibians.

The program grew in September 1993 with the introduction of Stage 2 and 3 to a total of 34 400 learners. The test was taken by 26 343 learners in July 1994 and 22 150 passed (1993/ 1994 NLPN Statistics, 1994 Annual Report). In November 1994, NLPN had 36 107 learners enrolled (1994/ 1995 Statistics).

These figures do not include those of other partners such as the Ministry of Defense, Namibia Literacy Program (NLP) and Okutumbatumba Hawkers Associations, just to mention a few. No figures of partners are available.

The Overall Evaluation states that there are 290,501 or 35% of all adults with less than four years of schooling. The program and its partners would like to get around 15% of all adults literate by the year 2000.

2.1.4.2 Learning and instructional materials

During September - December 1991, NLPN conducted writers' workshops wherein literacy primers were produced in nine different mother tongues. These primers were designed by Head Office staff, regional staff, local language experts and consultants from other countries. They are based on the phonics approach: where adults are introduced to different syllables, words and short sentences. The writing of a letter is introduced at the end of the book. Each primer is used with a picture code. Illustrations in the books were contextualized to be familiar to the majority of the readers who speak that language.

The books have been printed by private publishers in black and white print. They are well distributed without charge and are easily accessible through the structure of NLPN.

2.1.4.3 Training of DLOs and promoters

The program recruited, trained and appointed 50 DLOs during January - April 1992. These DLOs then recruited and trained 700 promoters during May - July 1992, who then had to recruit and to teach 20 learners each for Stage 1. An additional 44 DLOs were trained in February - June 1993. They also recruited and trained 20 promoters each, who then enrolled 20 learners each.

The duration of the DLOs' training course is 10 weeks and that of the promoters is three weeks. The Head Office training division, trained the DLOs with the assistance of consultants, who are working at the Directorate and literacy practitioners from other African countries. These DLOs recruit and train the promoters (literacy teachers). Apart from learning how to facilitate a class, the promoters also learn how to mobilize their community, recruit learners, keep the registers, teach the literacy materials, and also how to treat adult learners.

2.1.4.4 Fact-finding missions

Since September of 1992, the Head Office staff of NLPN conducted need assessment in the regions to find out how the program is doing on the ground. Instruments have been developed and staff has been divided to go to all the seven educational regions. These delegates were sent to give support and solve problems with the local colleagues and community members where possible. It was not designed to victimize the promoters, DLOs and RLO, but together to determine and evaluate the progress and setbacks made.

In 1995, this mission was not conducted because there was an overall evaluation. The following table gives a picture of how many learners were visited by the Head Office staff during the fact-finding-missions¹⁴.

Table: Fact-finding missions.

Year	Male learners	Female learners	Total
1992	220	466	686
1993	374	816	1200
1994 ¹⁵	1444	5240	6684

¹⁴ The figures represent around 5% of all learners.

¹⁵The 1994 figure has been compiled from regional reports, because the final report was not available.

The figure and facts provided from this sample exercise and that of the regional reports were compiled in one report which became a working document. They were also incorporated into the statistical performance reports which are made available to the donor agencies to show how their money was spent and the impact of the program. These visits were also done to avoid "ghost" classes and to help NLPN to plan how to reach the adults who are in need of these classes

2.1.4.5 Assessment and certification

The Curriculum Guide states that NLPN has two kinds of assessments. One final testing, which is taken at the end of the academic year, and two assessments during the year. The aim of the testing is to determine the learner's progress or level of competence. The marks of the two continued assessments form half of the final mark, and the final examination form the other 50%.

The Curriculum Guide also states that assessments will be used:

- "- to inform the adult learner of his/ her progress and achievements
- to inform the promoter of problems and guide ensuing compensatory teaching and for promotion purposes." (Curriculum Guide, 1993).

In 1993, the Evaluation Section of Adult Basic Education, conducted a pre-testing from May 31- June 11, to determine if Stage 1 learners are ready to take any examination. The pre-testing was covering writing, reading, dictation, a letter and ten sums. The results were that more than 70% passed, apart from the letter that had a pass mark of 56%.

The Curriculum Guide makes provision for the learners to be graded from A to E according to their performance. Grade A is given to the learners who achieve the level of *"surpassed basic competencies"* and Grade E for those who *"need further help to achieve the basic competencies."* Every learner who completes a literacy year, receives a certificate.

2.1.4.6 Overall Evaluation of NLPN

In what could be regarded as one in the world unique kind of participatory overall evaluation, NLPN conducted six comprehensive supplementary studies, which involved people from all levels in the program and experts from abroad.

The studies could be summarized as:

- ◆ DLOs carried out Case Studies of Selected Literacy Groups
- ◆ Namene J. compiled a study done by seven Head Office staff on An Evaluation of the Implementation of NLPN at District Level
- ◆ RLOs and DLOs conducted A Tracer Study of Learners who Enrolled in 1992
- ◆ Tjiho J.K. supervised The National Survey of Literacy Promoters
- ◆ The Social Sciences Division of the Multi-Disciplinary Research Division of University of Namibia' external study was on "A Community Impact Study of Adult Literacy in Okongo, Northern Namibia"
- ◆ Prof. H.S. Bhola's external study on "NLPN: A Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation."

The reason for this huge undertaking, was that NLPN wanted to conduct a formal evaluation during its third year of implementation. The coordinator of the overall evaluation of the NLPN, Dr. Agneta Lind, a SIDA sponsored adult literacy specialist, stated:

"The idea behind this evaluation initiative was to enable the Namibian government to evaluate the effectiveness of the NLPN during its first phase of implementation, so as to help explore the NLPN's future potential, reinforce what is being done right and to improve upon things that are in obvious need of repair. Apart from providing a basis for adjusting plans and improving implementation, the Overall Evaluation was intended to enhance and sustain the commitment and support to the program goal of achieving a literacy rate of 80 percent by the year 2000. Consequently, the purpose was to carry out a comprehensive study and to document the NLPN in all its aspects of planning, organization, implementation and impact" (Overall Evaluation, June 1995).

2.2 Theoretical framework

"Context and Factors in Acquiring Literacy Skills"

2.2.1 Definition of literacy

The answers to the question "What is literacy?" have varied so much over the years. One of the simplest definition of literacy was to be able to read and write one's own name. Then it expanded to include reading and writing simple sentences. This view was criticized because of its limited value and uses. Another stream defined literacy as being able to read, write and understand. Those who wanted to "measure" it, tried to link it with a certain minimum academic qualification or level of competencies. Critical theorists, like Paulo Freire, see literacy as a political discourse.

The following list is not complete, but represents some of the main stream definitions.

The definition of literacy by UNESCO has undergone various stages over the years:

- a) 1963 *"A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required."* (p11, Comings & Kahler, 1984)
- b) 1970 *"A person...who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his everyday life."* (p. 677, Van Norden Peck & Kling May 1977) (p.118, Wagner, David. Feb. 1990)
- c) 1975 Literacy is *"not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic's, but a contribution to the liberation of man and his full development... Literacy is not an end in itself, it is a fundamental right."* (p. 11, Comings & Kahler. 1984)

In 1970 the Bureau of Census on the United States of America defined illiteracy as, *"the inability to read and write a simple message either in English or any other language."* (p. 678, Van Norden Peck & Kling. May 1977)

Northcutt defines illiteracy in 1974 as, "*a construct meaningful only in specific cultural context, ...culture-bound, most specially, to the technical state of a given culture.*" (p. 678- Van Norden Peck & Kling. May 1977).

Kirsch and Jungeblut defined literacy as, "*...not simply... a set of isolated skills associated with reading and writing, but more importantly... the application of those skills for specific purposes in specific contexts.*" (p. 118, Wagner, David. Feb. 1990)

One of the questions that confronts literacy practitioners is still, "*Who should defines literacy, for whom?*"

2.2.3 Purpose of literacy

The question, '*Why Literacy?*' has been answered in many ways, depending on the 'agenda' of the literacy program. Some restricted it to 'functions' or expanded it to include vocational skills. The basic assumption made by these groups is that literacy enhance development. The critical theorists view literacy as political and therefore should address the fulfillment of man's personality in all its social and individual dimensions.

Those who link literacy to development, like Bhola, believes that it promotes economical, political and social development. It has also cognitive, cultural and ideological value (Bhola, 1980. pp. 1 - 8). These effects can be experienced by the individual, family, community, nation and world wide.

Hunter points out a few myths about literacy,

- "the third world remains poor because most of the population is illiterate;
- it is possible to rate the nations of the world on a scale that compares relative levels of literacy;
- what we need is a reliable definition of literacy; and
- equity and justice are the real issues, not just literacy'. (Hunter, 1987. pp. 1 - 7)

UNESCO explains the purpose of literacy in the context of "fundamental education" to develop what is best in the interest of the illiterates. This implies that literacy should develop the thinking, speaking, listening, calculating, reading and writing skills (Levine, Aug. 82. pp. 249 - 256).

Rahnema sees literacy as, "critical consciousness: the ability to interpret social reality and the will to act for the betterment of the human situation." (Rahnema, 1976. p. 165). He argues that it should enable the illiterates to read the word and the world. Freire describes the purpose of literacy as follows:

"As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed- even in part- the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world... Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, work, in action-reflection." (Freire, 1970. pp. 68, 69)

2.2.4 Strategies to provide literacy

A variety of models of planning and implementing literacy activities have become prominent over the years. Lind and Johnston categorized them as: the fundamental education approach, selective-intensive functional approach, the conscientization approach, mass campaign approach, large-scale general literacy program and the selective small-scale program. (Lind & Johnston, 1986). This paper will not discuss these strategies as their 'names' imply their nature.

One can categorized the main objectives of these strategies as political, developmental and educational. The importance and application of these objectives varies from the one approach to another. A continuum of these goals in the same strategy also exist.

According to Lind and Johnston, the answering of the following questions are important considerations to any literacy program:

"...What are the priority aims? Which groups should be included? What is the scale of the program, in number of the participants and period of time? How is motivation to be created or used? What is the framework of organization and supervision to be? What level of literacy is to be reached? What kind of teachers can or should be recruited? What training do they need? What languages, contents and methods should be used in the teaching program. What kind of evaluation should be used? What follow-up activities or facilities exist or need to be created to attach to the program?" (Lind & Johnston, 1986. p.49)

The answering of the above mention questions are also influenced by the resources available to a program. Some donors that sponsor literacy programs set a criteria that influence the framework of operation. The ideology of the leadership of a program also sometimes dictates its aims.

2.2.5 Context and factors of Acquiring Literacy Skills

There is no "magic" formula that can guarantee success for literacy. However, it seems as if conducive political, technical and social environments contributed to the success of some literacy programs. This by no means under estimate personal factors. For the sake of focus, this paper will only limit this discussion to "external" context and factors of acquiring literacy skills in a Large, Scale Literacy program.

Education has been declared by many forums, like the well known "*Education For All*"- in Thailand- Jomtien 1990, as a basic right of every human being. In this light, it is appropriate if a

government demonstrates commitment to provide literacy or resources for it. A study to determine the structures and approach that are more favorable in that particular context is an important consideration. The Declaration of Persepolis points out the following structures:

- "-those that, from the political point of view, tend to bring about the effective participation of every citizen in decision-making at all levels of social life: in economics, politics and culture.
- those that, from the economic point of view, aim at an endogenous and harmonious development of society, now at blind and dependent growth.
- those that, from the social point of view, do not result in making education a class privilege and a means of reproducing established hierarchies and orders.
- those that, from the professional point of view, provide communities with genuine control over the technologies they wish to use.
- those that, from the institutional point of view, favor a concerted approach and permanent cooperation among the authorities responsible for basic services" (Hamadache & Martin, 1990. pp. 23, 24)

The technical factors are essential conditions before the program is implemented like public awareness, mobilization and planning. The target group should become aware and be consulted about the program. Human, material and financial resources should be available. The role and uses of these resources differ from one situation to another. Planning how best to fit the program in the (educational) system and or with economical, social and cultural development.

UNESCO introduced functionality, participation, integration and diversification as four principles for operating a literacy program. This was done on September 8, 1976, An International Literacy Day. This project will focus now on the two literacy classes.

CHAPTER 3

THE STUDY

3.1 Selection of the groups

The researcher informed Mr. Elias !Nanuseb, the acting Regional Literacy Officer (RLO) of the Windhoek Region, about his desire to conduct research in that region. After discussions about the research project, a follow up meeting was held with the RLO, Taracky M. Namupala and Elizabeth Imene. (The last two persons are District Literacy Officers in whose areas of operation, the research took place.) The main goal for this meeting was:

- ◆ to inform them about research project
- ◆ to seek their collaboration in executing it
- ◆ to get their assistance in selecting two suitable groups
- ◆ to organize meetings with promoters (literacy tutors) and learners.

This meeting was successful and each DLO promised to do some ground work to get the above mentioned objectives met. Within days, each DLO identified a Stage 1 class and held a meeting with the class. The researcher was then introduced to the learners and promoters.

The reason for selecting Windhoek and not a remote, rural area was because of time and resources available to the disposal of the researcher. This is also the place where the researcher grew up and that provided some familiarity with the socio-economical conditions of these learners.

3.2 Constraints

3.2.1 Languages

The researcher is not fluent in the languages that were used as medium of instruction, but is familiar with them and could follow deliberations. In the Oshikwanyama class, the promoters played the role of a translator when the researcher required so. The Khoekhoegowab speaking learners could all speak Afrikaans well and it was used during interviews and discussions.

The researcher was aware of the shortcomings with translations in these particular groups. In order to overcome some of these barriers, the researcher recorded them, with their permission. A language expert was then approached for translation and discussions.

3.2.2 Time Frame

This research project started during the last three and a half months of the literacy academic year, which leave this study with missing pieces. The researcher could not determine the entry literacy level of the learners. Criteria for recruitment and the whole process of mobilization could not be documented by this study.

Though the researcher felt that some form of "community" was built between him and the groups, a longer period could have provided clearer perspective and better understanding of certain issues.

3.2.3 Attendance

The attendance of both classes during the time of research was excellent. The researcher found that up to 65 learners enrolled for each classes from the time the classes started until the time of the research. Most of the learners, who participated in the research, joined the class for less than four months.

The researcher could not get a clear picture on the reasons for the continued “drop-in” and “drop-out.” Can the researcher conclude that the reasons given to him by the few “drop-outs” which he interviewed, to be a replica of others’ views?

3.2.4 Measuring learning

Learning is an abstract phenomenon and is difficult to be measured. Learners come to the class for different kinds of reasons and they also enter it at diverse class readiness level. Some activities in the class are difficult to be measured-as-learning, e.g. the repetition of words after the promoter.

3.3 Oshikwanyama literacy class

3.3.1 Hakahana or Hainyeko

The Oshikwanyama Stage 1 class which was visited for research purpose was in Hakahana township, better known as Hainyeko. The majority residents of this area used to stay in a "compound"¹⁶, a men only single squatters. In 1978, the pervious regime demanded that the residence should vacate the building and should be resettled at Hakahana¹⁷.

¹⁶ Small housing for men

¹⁷ An Otjiherero word for “hurry”

According to some learners, a minister, in the South Africa's appointed Intern Government, told them: "*Muambo hakahana okumuna ondjiwo*¹⁸!" The tiny houses in that area were built in three months. The residents rename the township as (Petrus) Hainyeko, who was a freedom fighter of SWAPO's military wing, People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). He died during the liberation struggle.

3.3.2 Composition of the class

All seventeen learners, who were in the class during the research period, were male and the promoter was female. Ten of them were employed while the rest were unemployed. Only three learners had a one year schooling experience and had to drop out of formal schools. The age distribution of the learners varied from 13 years old to 48 years. The majority of the learners were between 25 - 30 years old.

3.3.3 Learning Place

The literacy class met in a community hall, which came about due to community own initiative. The residents use the Hainyeko hall for multi purposes such as meetings, voting poll, literacy class, weddings and even cultural activities. They look after the building themselves and a clinic is built next to it. Apart from these, there are only a few good roads, groceries stores, bottle stores and electricity available. It is very far situated from the main town.

The hall does only have chairs, a big table and a small chalkboard. This meant that only the promoter and the learners who sit next to the table use it as a "desk" to write on.

¹⁸ An Otjiherero sentence, which means, "Owambo, hurry to get a house!"

The researcher found that nine students stayed close to the venue, while six stayed relatively far and two stayed very far. This was established by asking the learners in which residential area they stayed.

3.3.4 Time

The Oshikwanyama class started on September 12, 1994. This class met every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 18:00 to 20:00, when the research started. The researcher only visited them on the Mondays and Tuesdays, because the Wednesdays were used for numeracy which was not considered for this research purpose.

The day when the researcher was introduced by the DLO to the class, it was also the time the DLO found that the time of meeting has changed from the original 19:00 to 18:00. According to the promoter, the learners decided to change the time because 21:00 was too late to go home. One understands the lack of dissemination of this information because the class came from a break in May and the DLO could probably not be reached in such a short period. However, this information should have been communicated immediately to the DLO, when these changes were made.

In general, this class mostly did not start on time due to the late coming of most learners. The first learner arrived a few minutes before six p.m. (the starting time) and the rest follow up to the forty fifth minute after the class was supposed to start. The promoter, who is the only lady in the class, was very patient and had a good working relation with the learners. The main reasons which were given for coming late were attending to other domestic activities or were coming late from work.

The promoter used well the time at her disposal to complete a lesson each night. The only problem was that she did not provide a break between the one hour and a half of lecturing, which forced learners just to stand up and work out if they needed a break or wanted to see the rest room (toilet). One does not say that adults should be treated like kids and not go out of a class when they need to, but that a well planned break in between a lesson, will prevent most disruption and will allow many learners to participate during the lesson deliberations.

3.3.5 Attendance

When the researcher looked through an enrollment form of the promoter, he found that 65 learners registered (or attended the class) since the time the class started in September 1994. During certain times there were more than thirty learners at one stage in the class. Though it was difficult to determine what exactly happened, the researcher were given the following reasons by ex-learners, promoter and learners:

- ◆ after the holiday breaks in December and May some learners did not returned back to the class;
- ◆ some learners stayed away from class after missing a number of lessons, because they felt guilty;
- ◆ moving away from Windhoek with work was another major problem;
- ◆ some quitted the class because they come very late from work and are often tired.
- ◆ some just lost interest in the program because they did not see immediate benefit;
- ◆ some learners told the promoter that they were experiencing some problems at home, which they were attending to and will return to class, but never did so.

According to the NLPN guide, the promoters are supposed to recruit learners twice a year; at the beginning of the academic year (September) and in February. But the learners of this class continuously "dropped in" and "dropped out" and the promoter accepted them every time.

Table: Enrollment period of the learners who are covered in this research project¹⁹:

MONTH ENROLLED	# OF LEARNERS ENROLLED
0-1 months	3
2 months (May)	0 Holiday
3 -4 months	6
5 - 6 months	5
7 months (December)	0 Holiday
8 months	2
9 - 10 months	3

These figures were established by asking learners how long they are in the program. The register could not clearly indicate when learners dropped out, during this period. The above mentioned figures stated that 14 learners from the total of 17 are six months or less in the program.

¹⁹These figures were taken June 26, 1995

It is possible for one to acquire a certain literacy competency level in that period, but one can not say that for all of them. The question remains, what should one do with those who do not master what Stage 1 wanted to reach?

One of the difference between this class and the Khoekhoegowab class, was that most learners of the lastly mentioned class have been in the program for a longer period than the six months. The Khoekhoegowab class could not only read their primer more fluently, but they were reading other materials on Wednesdays, such as the Bible and hymnbook. Some of them could write stories themselves, though they had many mistakes, which they gave to the researcher for the book *"Life is Not So Easy!"*

3.3.6 The promoter

The promoter, Ms. M. Mwafufya, was born in 1962 and had a standard 8 qualification. She did not do another job to supplement her income, but had used her free time to attend a typing course. The learners did respect her, and she came from the same community and was always understanding and patient.

3.3.7 Class activities

The activities of the class were nearly the same for each lesson, namely: greeting, reading, answering questions, words drilling, writing (or copying things from the learners handbook or board), giving assistance during writing and end the lesson with a prayer. At the end of the academic year, they were expected to write a test.

The promoter asked direct questions such as "what do you see on the picture in the book?" or "what are these people doing?" The learners also asked questions when they did not follow the instructions.

The primer was used in all lessons, while the letter writing was introduced very close towards the end of the academic year.

The learners were given verbal assistance when they wrote something wrong, but there was little variation in the approaches as no other additional materials were used and the lesson lacked initiative from the promoter to draw from the daily experiences of learners.

The researcher brought a newspaper article in Oshikwanyama to see if learners were able to read with understanding other materials. Only three the learners could follow the article with understanding apart from a few English words which appeared in the text. Though they were reading slowly, they seemed to be interested in the article as it was talking about a current political development which had many people talking.

3.3.8 Mobilization

In general, most learners heard about the program from friends by word of mouth. Since the Hainyeko Center is one of the few attraction in that area, some learners saw the lights and investigated what was going on and heard about the program.

The promoter also went from house to house in Hainyeko area and inform the community. They spread the news to their friends.

3.4 Khoekhoegowab literacy class

3.4.1 Composition of the class

During the research, there were only 18 learners who participated in this class. It was not possible to determine how many learners attended the class, since the time that it started on June 6, 1994.

Here is a brief academic profile of the learners:

- ◆ never attended school before;
- ◆ had one year school experience;
- ◆ was in school for two years and
- ◆ learners had three or more years of school experience before.

The researcher asked the three learners who had three years of schooling or more why they came to this particular class. One of them, who had a standard 5 qualification, said that she grew up in a Otjiherero speaking area and in her school career she was only exposed to Afrikaans, English and Otjiherero. Though she never forgot to speak her mother tongue, Khoekhoegowab, she could not write it. She saw the literacy class as a good opportunity for her to learn how to read and write her own language.

The other two learners, who did not continue with their school career after standard 1 (grade 3) always wanted to further their education. Since they never had an opportunity to do so, this was the first time they came back to a classroom situation.

The researcher suggested to them that they should have enrolled for Stage two or three instead of Stage one. This is a good example that the promoters should make sure that the learners whom they are recruiting are taken in at the right stage. Learners should not be recruited to ensure a good number in attendance.

Though this class has been on for longer than the normal time of a year, the researcher decided to go on with this class because most learners were less than eight months in the class by the time the research began (See table below).

Table: Enrollment period of the learners who are covered in this research project

MONTH ENROLLED	# OF LEARNERS
June 1995	2
May 1995	0 Holiday
March/ April 1995	6
January/ February 1995	4
December 1994	0 holiday
October /Nov. 1994	3
August/ Sept. 1994	1
0 June/ July 1994	2

When the promoter was asked about those who left the class, she stated that once the learners were able to write and read fluently, they left the class.

3.4.2 Learning Place

The venue was a classroom at Auas Primary School in Katutura, a township in Windhoek, and had enough desks and chairs. The problem was that the chairs were small and

that the promoter could have looked for a class with bigger chairs, than using that class.

Lights and the chalkboard were sufficient and the wall had attractive decorations.

About the suitability of the venue, seven learners stayed close, while eight stayed far and three very far from the class. Again here the distance was determined by the area in the township where they stay, though some parts of the same area are far from the school.

3.4.3 Time

This class started on June 6, 1994 until September 1995, which is sixteen months. The classes started at 17:00 until 19:00 every Monday to Wednesday. The Mondays and the Wednesdays were used for Stage 1 while Tuesdays were used for numeracy. The researcher only visited the class on Mondays and Wednesdays from June 1995 until mid- September 1995. Like in the other class, the promoter did not use a break during the class proceedings. The learners came up to half an hour late to the class.

3.4.4 Class activities

This class had a bit of variety, because Mondays were used for the primer: reading and writing. While Wednesday was used for reading from the Bible and hymnbook and writing things from the songbook. The link between the words in the songs and Bible were related to those of the primer. The decision to use religious materials was taken by the class and that was because they found the primer not to be sufficient. There was also a great interest from the learners to learn how to read the Bible and know how to find songs themselves from the book. They did not want to rely on memorizing the songs but actually learn to read them.

3.4.5 The promoter

The promoter, Ms. A. !Haoses (35), is a qualified school teacher. She also completed a three week promoter's training course. Anna was punctual and had a good relationship with her learners.

3.4.6 Mobilization

Most learners in this class heard about the class from the radio, when the RLO talked about the program but did not know where the classes were. Then the promoter went from church to church to announce the starting date of the classes and inform them about the venue.

Some learners took it on themselves to inform their friends and family members, which explained to the researcher why some learners were related.

3.5 Voices of the learners

Several studies by the Ministry of Education and other agencies showed that the historical imbalances prevented the majority of Namibians the right to education. However, this researcher wanted to get first hand information from learners in the Khoekhoegowab and Oshikwanyama class why they did not go to school in their youth.

This information was found important by this study as an alternative approach to find out who attended school before and who did not. It was also used to gain some "inner view" on the background of the learners and why they see education as necessary. This also helped the researcher and the promoter to know a bit more about the learners.

Some white farmers prevented the kids of their employees to go to school as it was in the case of Michael Dausab's story:

"I sit today without education, because I grew up under difficult circumstances. My father could not secure a permanent job. He had to travel from one farm to another to work. I was very young and had to travel with him, while all my brothers and sisters attended school.

When I became older, a farmer always took me with him, when he traveled, to open the gates of the farm for him. I had also to look after his truck in town, when he went to do business.

One day, my father decided to send me to school, but the farmer refused to release me. He even wanted to chase my father away from the farm if I was not going to work for him. I'm glad to get the opportunity to join the literacy program, so that I could learn. It is very important for me to learn how to write and read, to be able to help myself. I would like to invite other friends, who missed out in their youth to join these classes."

The researcher found a thirteen year old boy, Tangeni Nghilinganye in the Oshikwanyama literacy class. Normally, NLPN is catering for 15 year old and older people, but his story emphasize the dilemma between the formal and adult Education- of who should cater for whom. The entry requirements at many primary schools are from six to ten or eleven year old children. Those who do not get entrance before that age or dropping out before finishing primary school, will probably have to be taken care of by NLPN.

The researcher recorded *Tangeni's story* as follows:

"Tangeni Nghilinganye was born on 1 May 1982, at Onamakunde, in Southern Angola. He has one brother and two sisters. Tangeni grew up at his grand parents' house.

Unfortunately for him, there was no place available at the nearest primary school, when he was seven years old. This forced him to stay on a plot and looking after the cattle.

In 1994, his eyes gave him so many problems that his mother brought him to Windhoek in the hope that the doctors could help him. This gave his uncle Petrus the opportunity to see if he could be admitted to a primary school. All the principals told him that Tangeni was too old to start school.

A friend told him about a literacy class at the Hainyeko Center. He joined this class at the beginning of this year. As the youngest member of this class, Tangeni does not worry about the difference between his classmates and himself. He feels happy and proud to learn. He always wanted to learn how to write his name and those of his family members. Now he can also read and write his own language, Oshikwanyama. As any other thirteen-year-old child, Tangeni sometimes laughs when some adults make mistakes, but they do understand that he is only a kid. He is amongst those proud learners, who just completed the Stage 1 literacy program. Even his mother believes that he will go very far, because of his willingness to learn and strong determination."

The socio-economic situations for nearly all these learners were very difficult and accessibility to education was rare. They provided the following reasons for not attending school in their youth:

- ◆ life at home was so difficult (poverty) that parents could not take them to school;
- ◆ there were no schools available in the villages where most of them grew up;
- ◆ or schools were very far and transport was not available;
- ◆ had to look after cattle and help with work at home;
- ◆ parents could not stay at one place for a long period;
- ◆ had to look after the babies of family members;
- ◆ situations at family houses, who stayed closer to schools, were undesirable;
- ◆ some were too old when they were enrolled and dropped out because they could not "fit" in the school;
- ◆ the war in the north during the liberation struggle cause some to leave the country to fight the South African Army;

- ♦ some were afraid to travel to certain areas where the schools were, because they were afraid of the "makakunyas" (South African soldiers) and to step on landmines.

3.6 Coping with a literate society

3.6.1 Stories from learners experiences

The researcher found that illiterate adults are facing a lot of problems when they interact with the "literate world", and rely heavily on relatives and friends to "rescue" them in many situations. Not even to add that the introducing of English as the official language in Namibia widened the gap of communication between these people and many agencies.

Magda Elano, not her real name²⁰, told the following story:

"I became at the beginning of last year a member of 'SaamStaam'²¹, so that I can have my own house. I went to the office of the Local Government and Housing and collected a form. The form was written in English and I took it to a friend to complete it for me, because I can not read or write that language. After my friend completed the form, I took it back and within a few months I started to build my own house. I'm very proud to own my own place, which I can leave behind for my children".

Though she trusted the friend who completed the form on her behalf, one wonder what could have happened if that person wrote the house in his/ her own name. The researcher asked Magda what she did to ensure that all the information was correct, but she insisted that she just depended on the honesty of the friend.

²⁰ The researcher did not ask permission from learners to use their names. Real names only appear in stories from "Life is not So Easy."

²¹ It is an Afrikaans phrase for 'standing together'. In this context it refer to a housing project for low income people.

Ida Haosemas, not her real name, told about a situation she experienced when she started her first paid job last year.

"I got a house cleaning job via a friend who told me that the neighbor of her employer was looking for someone, because they just fired their worker. I was so excited to be able to work and support my self. My friend took me to the employer and I started to work. She told me that she would pay me R200.00 per month. I learned to distinguish money by looking at the color. If I got four red money, then I knew that the money was correct. That lady normally gave me my money in a closed envelope.

One day, I came home and opened the envelop just to discover that there were red money and not four as usual. I nearly cried, but my older sister told me that we should go to the post office so that she could phone her and find out what went wrong with my money. At first I was afraid that she will fired me because she might regard that as an accusation of dishonest. But I needed the money so badly that I allowed my sister to speak to her on the phone. To my surprise, the lady did not deny that there were problems with my money and she promised to give me the next day my R50. She apologized for the mistake, but I think she wanted to cheat me. Since that day I developed an interest to learn how to count so that something like that will not happen again."

When the researcher asked her why she did not normally open the envelope in front of the employer, she said that she was afraid of being accused of not trusting her. She added that many employers hate to be questioned or opposed when they say something and she was afraid to be fired. Discussions on people's rights need to take place, including issues such as the labor code, so that they know their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They also need to know how to lay a complaint at the Office of the Ombudsman.

Mike Damaseb, not the real name, told the researcher about the following banking problem he experienced at the end of the months.

"I always experienced problems at the bank at the end of the month. Before they introduced the automatic banking machines, I used to stand in the long row to wait for a clerk at the bank to complete for me some forms. One for banking my money

and another for withdrawing some cash. Now with this machines, I'm still struggling to withdraw money. They explained to me how to go about it, but I don't know what I sometimes press wrong because the money sometimes just refused to come out. Then I have to ask someone to help me. I think I become nervous when a lot of people are standing behind me to withdraw money. One thing which I hate is to loose my card from the machine and get a slip to collect the next day my card from my banking branch."

This can be a very frustrating situation, to go through it time and again. The numeric lesson could introduce a very simple demonstration in the class on how to bank. Other important things to know when to bank, withdraw or borrow money from the bank needs to be introduced informally, if there is a demand for it. This might not be applicable to rural area classes.

Anna Haraes told about her experience with the telephone one day at the work:

"My employer told me one morning as I came to work that the dog was very sick and that I should phone her at her working place if it started to vomit and refuse to eat food. I said yes, even though I knew that I do not know how to make a call. My hope was that nothing should go wrong with the dog, because she gave the dog some tablets, anyhow. She left and I was alone in the house.

Just around twelve o'clock I went outside to feed the dog and it was still lying on the ground in the same situation I saw it in the morning. I could see that it had vomited several times and rushed in the house. I took the telephone directory and paged through it several times. then I asked myself why I was paging through it while I knew I never used it before.

I nearly started to panic when I noticed a movement through the window that there was someone at the neighbors' house. I went out and noticed that the owner of the house next door came back from work. I explained to him what was wrong with the dog and he phoned my employer. She came back and took the dog to the veterinarian, though the dog died a few days later."

Knowledge of certain practical skills is becoming an indispensable demand in the towns and city of Namibia. Literacy learners in the Khoekhoegowab class express an interest to know how to use a telephone They are fully aware of the benefits of the use of a telephone,

but it might not be practical for the program to introduce some of these skills. They could be encouraged to approach their employers to assist them in this regard.

Many other similar stories were told by the learners and it became clear that these adults came to this program in the hope that what they will learn will enable them to cope with these kind of situations.

3.6.2 Pre-testing Posters

3.6.2.1 Posters with health messages

Apart from the learners experiences, the researcher went to three clinics and one hospital to see the different posters which they display. Then five posters were selected on the basis of being in most of the four places visited. These posters were brought to the khoekhoegowab class to get a sense of how these adults interpret these posters when they go to the clinic.

The first poster was about "A Certificate or Parenthood?", which the Ministry of Health and Social Services aimed at mobilizing the youth to focus on their studies and say no to sex while they still go to school. One of the reasons for selecting this poster was the role parents needs to play in sex education and reinforcing national policies.

The learners describe what they literally saw on the poster, namely three school girls holding certificates or letters in their hands and seem to be happy. Some said that the girls were singing or reading. The main message which is education before sex could not be mentioned. It is true that one of the constraints with using that poster was the language used

on it, English, which was not understood by the learners. However, a poster should be able to stand on its own and someone need to understand how to get the message.

At the clinics where that poster was hanging, only the English version of it was available and this is what these adults saw when they visit the clinic. For this pre-testing purpose, the researcher wanted to know how they interpret posters which they saw, even if the language was not familiar.

The second poster was about "Stop AIDS and use of a condom". Most learners said that they saw two people who are in love or the man is "*diam*²²" the lady. Some said that the two were dancing and or singing. The condom box the man was holding in his hand was mistaken for a matches box. It surprised the researcher that even six learners saw these two as small kids. Only after the explanation by the researcher did they understand the message.

The next poster was "Safe motherhood- needs responsible fatherhood", which was a four message-in-one poster. This was the most confused poster. On the first message they said that they saw a man, a pregnant women and three kids. No one raised the issue of child spacing, which was the main aim of the message. The second message on this poster was about "fatherhood support", but the learners state that its about a man hugging a woman (some said wife or girlfriend). The third message was about a man who had a lot partners. The learners however, said that they say a man/ boy/ "botstotso"(a gangster) and women who are talking or singing. The last message on poster three was to emphasize the importance of knowing the danger signs in pregnancies. The learners said that they saw a nurse who was telling people something.

²² A Khoekhoegowab word for "proposing love."

The fourth poster was about "Oral Health in Namibia". The message was very well understood by all learners, that it was about someone cleaning his/ her teeth. The part of the world health day was not understood at all, but at least, the learners could talk about the importance of cleaning one's teeth.

The last poster was on "Save Motherhood- danger in pregnancy increases with...smoking, carrying heavy things, drinking and eating less food". Again the learners said that they saw a pregnant woman who was smoking, drinking, carrying something and eating food. They failed to recognize the main message on the poster: that the pregnant woman was carrying a heavy bag and had little food to eat.

As the design of these materials is not the responsibility of DABE, the following comments will not be included in the "finding and recommendation" section.

One can conclude that only 20% of the five posters were understood by the 16 learners who attended the class on that day (June 24, 1995). Most of the signs, symbols and images need to be "revisited" and localized once could be identified or created and used. Posters with four messages are very confusing and could be used as Wall Charts. Normally, charts are used as tools for instruction with explanations. Local languages could be used, and being reinforced by the radio and TV.

The promoters could collect the posters from the clinic and use them as a Code to discuss issues such as "AIDS"/ "STDS"/"teenage pregnancy". Health workers could also be invited to lead discussions of concern for the community. Issues such as confidentiality during treatment or dealing with their "taboo's" (beliefs), role of traditional healers could be discussed at these meetings.

3.6.2.2 Posters with shopping messages

Messages from advertisements by different supermarkets were compiled on a sheet and taken to the Khoekhoegowab speaking class. Learners were asked questions like:

- ◆ what is this article about?;
- ◆ how much does it cost?;
- ◆ where can one buy it?
- ◆ what are the different ways how one can pay for this item?
- ◆ give me an example from your own experiences with supermarkets/ furniture stores.

Around 75% of the 15 learners who were tested answered the questions well and they could even say which shop was more cheaper than the others. The only area where some of them struggled was on the price of the furniture, but one can understand that four figure numbers are not included in their numeric books.

3.6.2.3 Poster of political leaders

The researcher took a self made poster of various political leaders including the president, cabinet, national council, opposition learners and some tribal leaders. Only the president, Hon. Sam Nujoma, was known by every learner, followed by the Minister of Local Government and Housing, Dr. Libertine Amathila and the right prime minister, Hon. Hage Geingob, with a high percentage. A good number of learners could know the deputy prime minister, Hon. Hendrik Witbooi, ministers like Hon. Theo-Ben Gurirab and Hon. Hidipo Hamutenya. Hon. Chief Justus Garoeb, a member of parliament, was also recognized by a

substantial number of learners. Hon. Mishake Muyongo, the official opposition leader, was known by half of the class. A few other politicians were known by one or two learners.

No learner knew a member of the National Council nor its purpose. They could only name the names of three political parties- South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and United Democratic Front (UDF).

3.7 Literacy materials

3.7.1 General Comments

Both the Oshikwanyama and Khoekhoegowab primers were developed at the same workshop on the same approach- phonic. The size of the letters in the book are acceptable for the learners. Prof. Bhola, who recently conducted a sub-study in Namibia, seemed to be impressed with the Stage 1 materials and but had the following to say:

"Existing curricular materials are good, but could be better. For example, the literacy primers as available are good professional products. These were written participatory by teams of professionals within the NLPN and then written by specialists in the linguistics department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Judging from the reception these materials have gotten from adult readers, these materials must have been written quite well and must have professional merit as primers...The current literacy primer(s) should be retained as Stage 1 text(s) after thorough revisions done on the basis of feedback from learners, promoters, and other stakeholders" (Bhola, 1995).

However, Bhola did not explain "why" revision should be done and "what" needed to be revised.

3.7.2 Content of the primers

The frequency count of most syllables has been covered well. The Oshikwanyama primer has 10 topics dealing with the one form or another of agricultural activities, 5 topics on animals, 3 revision lessons and the rest are issues such as money, telephone and letter.

Hope and Timmel mentioned six important areas of life which are covering a huge spectrum of life, based on a paper of INODEP. The researcher tried to categorize the topics in both primers on these areas, and those which did not fit anywhere had been placed as "unclassified" category.

3.7.2.1 Oshikwanyama primer

Table: Categorizing of the topics in the Oshikwanyama Stage 1 primer

Area	lesson no.	TOTAL
Basic needs (clothing, shelter, water, food and health)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24	14
People's relationships	16, 17,	2
Community decision making process and structures		0
Education, skills and socialization	7, 11, 18, letter	3
Recreational	23	1
Beliefs, values and ideologies		0
Unclassified (things and animals)	13, 14, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29	7

A closer look at the above mentioned figures "explain" that most topics concentrated mostly on basic needs and "unclassified" categories. The basic issues of rural areas. frequency count may lead to the neglect of certain areas, which are important to people to debate in class. However, some topics like "oukumwe" (working together/ co-operation) could be used to introduce literacy via one or a combination of the following areas:

- ◆ relationship between people;
- ◆ community decision making process and structures;
- ◆ education and socialization;
- ◆ beliefs and values.

It probably depends on the promoter's innovation, but the primer could has covered these areas.

3.7.2.2. The Khoekhoegowab primer

The Khoekhoegowab primer cover mostly basic needs and "unclassified" categories. Apart from that, four lessons are revision lessons and the rest are covered by the categories in the table below. All the illustrations match with their key words.

Table: Categorizing of the topics in the Khoekhoegowab Stage 1 primer

AREA	Lesson	TOTAL
Basic needs	4, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17	7
Relationship between people	8	1
Community decision making process and structures	5	1
Education, skills and socialization	16,19, letter	3
Recreation		0
Beliefs, values and ideology		0
Unclassified (things and animals)	1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 20	6

3.7.3 Short comings with the primers

In the two classes that were visited for this research project, some topics did not yield themselves well for critical discussion. The main reason for this is a lack of what Paulo Freire is calling 'generative themes'. Most illustrations and topics do not present a problem, situation or issue which are so important to the learners that they generate energy to break through apathy and stimulate initiative for action. Topics like "*sores*" (sun), "*tsaob*" (ash), "*ondjaba*" (elephant) do not provide a "lot of room" for the promoter to conduct a discussion. On the other side, this problem could be partly caused by the way promoters were trained to conservatively follow certain number of steps to teach a lesson.

The syllables in the lessons are accompanied with very limited text, which one could justify with the argument that illiterates "needs first to learn them before using them in reading". However, short stories, short report from "newspapers" (even self created once), poems and well known songs could have been incorporated to stimulate learners interest in reading. Resent studies proved that people do learn reading and writing the same way they learned how to speak. One does not learn to speak a language by using syllables. The context and need for learning something should be a pre-condition.

In the Khoekhoegowab class, there were expressions in the book that were not familiar for the area where the learners came from. A good example could be the second lesson of the Khoekhoegowab book is talking about "*Sores ge ra sari*" (The sun has woke up).

The illustrations in the books are realistic and well designed. However, an illustration was used twice in the Oshikwanyama book. In fact, 14 of the 25 illustrations in the

Oshikwanyama book is dealing with nearly the same form of an agricultural activity. Many of them have a similar appearance of people working in the field and only by reading the words would one understand their message. At least seven illustrations, in both the Oshikwanyama and Khoekhoegowab books, demonstrate the traditional role of women working in the fields or doing domestic work. It is true that they are the people who perform currently most of these duties in Namibian communities, but what about creating illustrations which challenge the "status quo"?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Attendance of classes

According to the attendance registers and asking learners when they joined the program, the researcher concluded that a continues "drop in" and "drop out" took place in both literacy classes, especially after the holidays.

This had the following implications:

- ◆ not all the learners were at the same literacy level;
- ◆ the promoters were sitting with some kind of a "multi stage" class;
- ◆ advanced learners became discouraged or de-motivated if they had to hear some of the same things again;
- ◆ when the promoters took off with a lesson and learners who joined the program for less than four months were left in the "cold" if they struggle to cope with more advanced content.

Both the Head Office and Regional staff should discuss this issue very serious to find practical solutions. This could be let by the Research and Planning division in close consultation with the other sections.

One possibility which could be investigated is to divide the literacy year in three shorter terms. The content then could be structured in such a way that the promoter finished a third of the content during each term, as a unit. This might help the

promoter to structure their work in such a way that they and the learners know what to accomplish during the four months. A learner could still need to complete three terms in order to complete a Stage or able to fulfill the requirements of the particular level.

4.2 Communication between the DLOs and the Promoters

There is a good working relationship between the two promoters and their District literacy Officers. The meetings between them during the year covered: the three week training, delivering of literacy materials, refresher courses and organizing them for preparing the final test.

However, there are things that the promoters failed to inform the DLOs or which they established during class visits, like:

- the change starting time from 19:00 to 18:00 in the one class;
- new enrollment was not executed twice, but on a continued basis;
- one promoter was holding books and the learners only had them during the lesson;
- there were no classrooms and community committees;

The class visit by the DLOs should be "extended" to a type of an informal training session, without interrupting the lesson of the promoters. Problems which are discovered could be recorded and discussed with the promoters and common solutions should be found. Some problems should be addressed in the refresher courses. DLOs should verify themselves with the information given to them to avoid "ghost" learners.

The Guide propose that each class should has a classroom committee and that a number of classes in the same community should have a community committee. The

aim of these committees was to give more ownership of the program to the learners and the community. They could also serve to evaluate the program and propose to the promoter and DLO how to improve it. With the absence of these committee, one wonder why they were not formed. At least at the classroom level, there should be a committee which should help the promoter to run the affair of the class.

4.3 Teaching methodology

The researcher found that both promoters were very enthusiastic about their work and tried their utmost best. They turned up at every class and were prepared, though they did not write a lesson plan. The learners did respected them and vice a versa.

However, they mostly used the lecture method, which Paulo Freire refer to as the "Banking approach". This approach is based on the assumption that adults comes "empty" (thoughtlessly) to the class and the promoter is the only one with all the knowledge. When the promoters were teaching, the learners' role was simply to listen, writing what they were instructed to write, answer questions or asking questions related to the task (if not clear) and repeating words or phrase(s).

Learning is a two-way-"traffic":

Various studies proved that optimum learning takes place in a situation where both the promoter and the learners are learning from one another. This is very true when it comes to adult education, as they bring a broad experience to the class which should be incorporated into the learning situation. Promoters should allow the learners

to contribute towards the lesson and reflect on the relevance of the lesson to their daily life and needs.

Calskins introduced a diagram which tried to describe four possible ways of interaction between a teacher and the learners. According to this classification, Quadrant A represent a situation where the teacher is lecturing and the learners are mostly listening and answer questions. Little contribution is expected from them. The ideal situation in a classroom is Quadrant B where both the learners and the promoter learn from one another and have something to contribute. It is here where the vast experiences of the learners could be incorporated in the subject matter and dialogue is created in the class. Quadrant C is referring to a situation where the learners are actively involved and the promoter is passive, e.g. the learners are reading or writing and while the promoter is playing low profile. The last quadrant is where both the promoter and the learners are passive, e.g. both are watching the TV or movie.

Table: Calskins²³ classification of interaction between a tutor and learners

A. Promoter is active, but the learners are passive.	B Both the promoter and the learners are actively involved in the activities of the class.
C. The learners are active, and the promoter is passive.	D. Both the promoter and the learners are passive.

²³ This is an adopted version of Calskins diagram, which he called "Growing in the teaching of writing". 1986.

Group work and peer teaching:

Learning should take place in a more participatory process and learners should take charge of their own learning. This could be advocated through the process of group work and peer learning. As these methods were not used by both promoters, the shy or less talkative learners could have participated more actively. Interaction and learning from one another could have taken place. Leadership is often also developed through group work, because learners are expected to report back after discussion or doing an activity together. The promoters handbook for Stage 1 states that the group work approach has the following three purposes:

- "to literate people and help them to become critical and active members of the community;
- to inspire a spirit of friendship and working together by giving adults the opportunity to work in groups, share ideas, learn from each other, undertake common action;
- to help people learn faster how to read and write, by teaching first those words which are most important to them, in a co-operative rather than a competitive atmosphere." (Promoters Handbook, 1993)

Some suggestions how to use the "question and answer" method:

The promoters asked mostly direct questions like: "What do you see on the picture?" "How many people do you see?" "What are they doing?"

It is not wrong to ask these kind of direct questions, but if they are used, they should be used to create "genre" (to lead to more challenging questions). They should lead to understanding, critical thinking and reasoning, not only aiming at recalling information and reproduction. Questions should also be leading to discussions on

current issues and topics of concern for the adults. Learners should also get a chance to evaluate, judge or give an opinion on a discussion point. They could also put themselves in the place of those portrait e.g. in the picture code and state what they should have done in that situation.

When this kind of atmosphere is created, the promoters will benefit also from the class by learning from the experiences and knowledge of adults. It could also create a platform for sharing indigenous knowledge, cultural values and practices in the classroom.

Other ways of facilitating a class:

The promoters should be trained how to use adult teaching techniques in the class to make their lessons more interesting and to optimize learners' participation. The following teaching techniques could be used: ice breakers, simulations, songs, fish bowl, brainstorming, case study, demonstration, critical incident, role play, drama, dances, micro-teaching, buzz session, "hot potato", interview, lecturette, pictures, panel discussion, peer training and kitchen concept.

These teaching techniques could however not be used on a random, cultural appropriateness and relevance to the learners should be investigated before use. The age and gender of the learners are also pre-conditions which need to be considered before employing these techniques.

Guest speakers could also be invited to discuss a topic which interests the learners and they requested more information on it. Possible speakers could be health workers, municipality officers (if the class is in a town), good story tellers, headman or traditional

leader (if the class is in a rural setting), just to mention a few. The learners should be involved in the decision on "who" and "why" that person should be invited.

4.4 Classroom arrangement

The classroom sitting arrangement of both classes were very formal as the learners had to sit in rows. This prevented the class from interacting more meaningfully as those learners in front had to turn around if they wanted to follow what those at the back were saying.

To some extent, this has also been the implication that the learners were reading or giving the answers for the promoters as they had to face them and not their classmates. This was also observed by the researcher in the two classes that the sole "audience" of the learners answers was the promoter. That means that the promoters were standing most of the time in front of the class and the learners were only asking the tutor or implementing the instruction of her. Other learners were mostly not asked to answer the question of their mates if they were not told to do so.

It could be recommended that promoters should not only be "told" that the learners should sit in a horse shoe (half circle) form during their training, but those who train them should "practice" and set the example. During the first class visit of the DLOs to the class after the training, promoters could be reminded if they are not employing it.

The promoters should allow more time for interaction in the class and the focus should be shift away from "*doing it for the teacher*" to "*doing it for themselves and their classmates*." This means that the responsibility in the class should be shared by all

involved. One could do this by giving the learners a chance to report, lead a discussion or even some topic. Nothing, however should be imposed on them and the promoter could be tactful by giving learners' responsibility according to their ability and interest.

4.5 Literacy Materials

4.5.1 Additions to the primers

The primers of Oshikwanyama and Khoekhoegowab have 27 topics which focus on rural area. This was done because the National Literacy Program in Namibia has to cater for both urban and rural learners. One understands that the learners who live in the urban areas have strong ties with their rural homes. This led to the development of one primer per language for all the learners who want to learn to read and write that language. One should also not forget that financial implications led to such a decision.

The Oshikwanyama and Khoekhoegowab primers need to be "expanded" by the promoters to cover areas of life like people's relationships, community decision making process and structures, educational, skills, socialization, recreational, beliefs, values and ideologies, relating them more to the learners every day experiences. This can only happen once the tendency to "blindly" follow the primers are broken and promoters go beyond the primers and teach adults things like:

- ♦ **their date of birth and that of their families;**
- ♦ **writing of names which are important to them;**
- ♦ **writing a story of an event told by the learners and use it as text in the class;**
- ♦ **encourage the telling of oral history;**

- ♦ reading and writing days, dates, months and years;
- ♦ making cards for different events;
- ♦ writing the autobiography of learners;
- ♦ using other materials such as Bible, newspapers, hymnbooks for reading;
- ♦ role play;
- ♦ cultural activities;
- ♦ discussing critical issues in the community;
- ♦ inviting speakers on important topics;
- ♦ more exercises with letter writing and exchange of letters;
- ♦ or things that can be proposed by the learners.

These are just a few examples, but every class is unique and the promoter should make sure that literacy needs of those particular adults are met. If an adult comes to class and tells the promoter about an embarrassing situation like he/ she experienced, the promoter should exploit that situation and look for ways how to help that person. The focus on the class should not be the final test, but rather on to what extent was the class meaningful to these adults.

4.5.2 Writing Exercise

The primers seem to concentrate on reading skills and "neglects" to devote "enough" attention on writing skills. Though there are writing exercises ("*Tu shangeni*"/ "*A da xoa*") at the end of every lesson, they are treated by promoters as being there by accident. In fact, there are no lessons that are aiming at the teaching writing (and drawings). Not enough time is

spent on the teaching and exercising of writing. The lack of these types of lessons does not assist the promoter in "how to teach writing for those who can not write".

Free drawings and map drawing:

Drawings could be introduced to help the learners to learn how to keep the pencil straight. It could be used for educational purpose to draw their community maps, problems in their community or things that relate to a story told by a learner. These drawings could then be used for discussions, let by the drawer and the class could analyze it and propose solutions. These could help the promoter to relate that to key words and to know what interest the learners for incorporating it in the program. Drawings can be a powerful tool to indicate how the learners view (portray) or feel about something or someone.

Creative writing:

All the writing exercises are already pre-determined and there are no dictation, creative writings and coping from other sources such as hymns, poems, books or newspapers. Learners need to be encouraged to write and write and write, because that is the only way of learning writing. At the beginning the promoters should not put much emphasis on the correct spelling, but text created by learners should be regarded as an achievement in it self. The more the learners' writing improves, the more the promoter and the learners should jointly look at spelling, grammar, punctuation and sentence construction, without removing the emphasis from experiencing satisfaction from being able to write and interpret one's own writings.

Letters:

The letter writing is only introduced at the end of the book. The rational for introducing the letter at the end was that the learners would hopefully be able to write sentences with minimum difficulty.

Many learners indicated in various studies that they wanted to write letters to be able to keep secrets, so it might be a good consideration to introduce the teaching of a letter as soon as possible. That could take place after the teaching of the first five lessons or when the promoter sees that his/ her class is ready. Learners should also be given a chance to write to each other, friends and families. These letters could be read in front of the class or discussed in groups, with the writers approval, after sufficient practice.

4.5.3 The use of picture code

During the three and a half months visits by the researcher, only one promoter used the picture code three times. It was only used for the learners to say what they saw. The picture code was basically used to introduce the topic (key word) and not to provoke the learners' critical thinking surrounding a problem, issue or situation in the community or country. Once the learners identified the keyword, no further discussions followed. The promoter asked questions like : "How many people do you see? What are they doing?" These questions are good, but they could have led to other possible questions such as: "Why do we see only women who are carrying water? Where are the men and why are they not helping them? Did you heard about the conference recently held on women?"

The use of a (picture) code should be reinforce during the training. The main aim for using the picture codes was to teach the key word, which is not wrong, but it should be extended beyond that, to link it to daily experiences of learners. Other familiar words can be introduced to reinforce the syllables taught in the lesson.

Other codes such as songs, posters, poems, pictures, stories, ice breakers or dances should be introduced by the promoter or learners to provide more participation and variety.

Codes and key words could be used as link to a "generative theme" in order to stimulate meaningful discussions and get the learners learn "their words" which they found important to know.

4.5.4 Revising NLPN materials to attract men

Prof. Bhola in his sub study of NLPN commended NLPN for designing such good materials which cover a variety of topics. He raised the concern that "One of the reasons mentioned for the comparatively low attendance of males is that they see the content embodied in the primers and reading materials to be primarily addressed to women" (Bhola, 1995).

This statement need to be investigated and addressed.

4.5.5 Supplementary materials for Stage 1

No primers, even if they are designed by the best experts in the world, will meet the needs of all learners, as there are no homogeneous classes. The proposed revised handbook could be used to ensure that all the syllables in the language are taught, but there is a great

need for the promoter to add supplementary materials to make the classes more relevant and interesting. This can be done by using the whole language approach to create text from and with the learners, which could be employed hand-in-hand with the current phonics approach.

4.6 The impact of literacy on the learners

The Overall Evaluation of NLPN and two videos which were recorded for NLPN, state that many learners gained confidence and improved their self image through the newly acquired skills. According to the Tracer Study of the Overall Evaluation they were quoted to be said:

- * I used to feel very bad about being illiterate;*
- * My children and friends love the fact that I am attending classes;*
- * someone can not cheat me about money;*
- * Now I have discovered the usefulness of it which has brought me to see the clear light I don't think I could get;*
- * I did not know how to write and read. I have learnt good things which will lead me to a better life, because I was dead. Let me just say, I was dead, because I could receive a letter written that 'Calvin, today you are going to be killed.' I could have taken the letter to be read by someone who wants to kill me. And he would go ahead and just kill me. Now, things are different, I have learnt a lot;*
- * Now, people do respect me..."*

Some of the learners who participated in this research, also express their gratitude toward the Government for setting up such a program to provide them with an opportunity to learn how to read and write. Some joined the program to be able to read the Bible, signs, hymnbook, writing letters and reading newspapers.

This could be regarded a strength that NLPN has which should be build on. One of the ways they could do that is to consider it strongly to publish these wonderful voices of the learners in a booklet form. They could also be use as additional materials

to motivate others and as supplementary materials. During the National Literacy week, which is a mobilization event of NLPN in the month of September, some of these stories could be used on radio, TV and newspapers.

There is also a need for the program to act on what "drop outs" and community members are saying about the negative part of it. Dropping out of a program could be regarded as an "evaluation" by ex-learners on how they view the program. That is why it would be misleading and short sighted to only pay attention to the positive remarks.

4.7 Revisiting the testing issue

According to NLPN, one its literacy academic year has two informal continues assessments and one final test. The two assessments provide half of the learner's final mark and the other half comes from the test. The following components are tested: dictation (10 points), reading of ten words (10 points), letter (20 points) and numeracy (20 points).

NLPN is stating that the testing of learners is to determine the progress of the learner and to establish the level of the learners' performance to the required minimum competencies. The taking of the test is not compulsory, though one only gets a certificate if he/ she takes the test. The results of the test does not mean that someone failed, but indicates that that person needs more assistance to achieve the minimum requirements. It also depends on the learner if he/ she wants to repeat a certain Stage or not.

NLPN statistics states that there are a number of learners who do not sit for the final

assessment as indicated by the Overall Evaluation:

"1992/93	Stage 1	62% of the enrolled learners wrote the test. 49% of the enrolled "passed" the test
1993/94	Stage 1	73% of the enrolled learners wrote the test 56% of the enrolled learners "passed" the test"

(Overall Evaluation, 1995)

This researcher visited two classes over a period of nearly four month and came to the following observations about testing (examination):

- ◆ some learners do not turn up for the class during the testing time, even if they got a second chance;
- ◆ there is no feedback given to learners apart from the day when they receive their certificates, when they see which symbol they got. (There is no indication if the meaning of the symbols are explained to the learners or not);
- ◆ there were no indication that promoters were trained to involve the learners in self assessment and evaluation;
- ◆ learners do not enter the class at the same time and are not equally ready to take up the test;
- ◆ there is no standardized entry requirement (apart from if the learner could write his/ her name and previous academic record), which could ensure that they entered "right" Stage.
- ◆ what do the promoters do to rectify the problems, experienced by learners;
- ◆ the structure and components of the examination are too "formal".

This project does not prescribe for NLPN that it should abandon testing, but it just want the program to find some solutions for the issues (concerns) mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Its Evaluation and Monitoring Division could also consider to expand the components of the test to include attendance and learners contributions in class. A study on how other programs, which are not executing testing, could be done to incorporate "acceptable" components of their evaluation form in NLPN. The program could also consider to build in components for self assessment by learners.

4.8 Literacy academic year

Each academic year of the National Literacy Program in Namibia, is one year normally from October to September. The promoters enroll learners only twice a year- at the beginning of the year and after the first six months. This study, like the Overall Evaluation, pointed out that promoters enrolled or accepted the learners to attend the class any time when they wished to do so.

The Oshikwanyama class, that is covered by this research, started September 12, 1994, while the Khoekhoegowab class started in June 6, 1994. That is three months difference. Both classes wrote the literacy test in September 1995

There is a need for NLPN to set up a team, led by the Research and Planning Division, to study if the current academic year is the most feasible thing to execute for this program or not. The team could then determine if it requires one academic year for

one to become literate? If not, then there is a need to "spell out" what which should be gained by the end of every academic year.

It could investigate if classes are covering the required 40 weeks of classes and make some recommendations to the regions.

The duration of the program before taking a break needs to be set up straight so that a reasonable number of lessons could be completed during each term. Those who have to harvest/ farming, could then do so without interrupting their literacy program and those who prefer to break up with the formal schools could do so. These breaks should however, be standardized to allow the learners enough time to come back to complete the same number of weeks.

The proposed team might come up with interesting findings and recommendations, like e.g. that there is a need to divide an academic year in three terms and that a learner should progress to the other stage once he/ she has achieve "X" number of competencies or completed three terms..

4.9 NLPN goal of 80% literacy by the year 2000?

Many Ministries and organizations are working to reach great ambitious visions by the year 2000. The National Literacy Program in Namibia has set itself and various partners the task to get 80% of all its illiterate adults, literate by that year.

The enrollment figures of NLPN in certain regions are very impressive, while others are very far behind the "mark".

The following recommendations could only be investigated by the different regions and practical ones could be implemented:

- ♦ **a needs assessment should be carried out to find ways of reaching more men if NLPN has to reach that goal;**
- ♦ **commercial farms and other hard-to-reach-areas need to receive attention by discussions between the farm owners, unions and NLPN to set up classes or centers in those areas;**
- ♦ **more partners are needed, especially in the private sectors;**
- ♦ **community learning centers could be set up to provide a meeting and learning place;**
- ♦ **in areas where there is more than one class with less than 10 learners, they should be combined to save expenditures;**
- ♦ **in areas where there are too many potential learners, a promoter could be allowed to have two classes, even if he/ she has to be paid only half of the honoraria for the second class.**

4.10 SUMMARY

This study was conducted over a period of three and a half months in two Stage One literacy classes. The main aim of the study was to determine whether the National Literacy Program in Namibia is addressing the specific literacy needs of these two classes. The case study covers 35 learners in Windhoek.

The study concluded that some learning did take place in the classes, if the results of final examination is something to go by. The attendance and dedication of the learners and the promoters was outstanding.

However, this study noted that the learners came with a broader expectation to the class, than what the program had to offer. They did not only come to the class to learn how to read, write and count. They wanted to learn specific literacy skills that would help them to cope with specific situation in their daily lives. They also felt that they had something to contribute to the program, instead of only receiving.

The teachers, who received a three week training course, used mostly the so-called “lecture method” to teach the primers. More than half of the content in the two primers deals with rural area issues. These learners found them inappropriate in their urban situation.

This study concluded that the learners and teachers should be given more ownership and responsibility in the creation of text. This does not mean that the primers should be abolished. It only means that irrelevant parts could be supplemented with learner-generated and other existing materials.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bataille, L. (Ed). 1976. A Turning Point for Literacy. Pergamon Press. Oxford.
- Bhola, H.S., 1984. Campaigning for Literacy- A critical analysis of some selected literacy campaigns of the 20th Century, with a memorandum to decision-makers. UNESCO/ ICAE Study, Paris, May 1982.
- Comings, John & Kahler, David. Oct. 1984. Peace Corps Literacy Handbook. Peace Corps. Washington, D. C.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. Pedagogy of the oppressed. The Continuum Publishing Company. New York, NY.
- Hamadache, Ali and Daniel Martin. 1986. Theory and Practice of Literacy Work: Policies, strategies and examples. UNESCO/ CODE.
- Hunter, Carman St John. 1987. Myths and Realities of Literacy/ Illiteracy. Convergence, Vol. XX (1). World Education, Inc., Boston, MA.
- Kahivere. W.N. 1995. Life is not so easy. Desktop Publication. Windhoek
- Lind, Agneta & Johnston, Anton. Oct. 1986. Adult Literacy in the Third World- A review of objectives and strategies. SIDA. Stockholm.
- Ministry of Education and Culture, February 1993. A Curriculum Guide for the National Literacy Program in Namibia. Windhoek.
- Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993. A do khomai tsi xoa. Khoekhoegowab. National Literacy Program in Namibia. Windhoek Printers. Windhoek.
- Ministry of Education and Culture & Social Science Division Multi-Discipline Research Center University of Namibia, August 1994. Adult Literacy in Ondangwa and Windhoek: A Survey of Literacy Skills and Education. Windhoek
- Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993. Elango Laaveshe. National Literacy Program in Namibia. Windhoek Printers. Windhoek.
- Ministry of Education and Culture, by Agneta Lind, June 1995. Findings of the Overall Evaluation of The National Literacy Program in Namibia. Windhoek.
- Ministry of Education and Culture, January 1992. Guide to the National Literacy Program in Namibia. Windhoek

- Ministry of Education and Culture. 1993. Literacy Stage 1: Promoter's Handbook. Windhoek printers. Windhoek.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (Bhola H.S.) May 1995. A Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation. Windhoek
- National Planning Commission. 1991. Population and Housing Census. Basic Analysis with highlights. Printed in Sweden. Orebro.
- Serfontein J.H.P. 1976. NAMIBIA?. Fokus suid Publishers, Randburg. S.A.
- Tjitendero M.P., May 1991. Opening Speech at the national seminar on literacy. Windhoek.
- Van Norden Peck, Cynthia & Kling, Martin. May 1977. Adult Literacy in the Seventies: Its Definition and measurement. Journal of Reading.
- Wagner, David. Feb. 1990. Literacy Assessment in the Third World. Comparative Education Review, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 118-126.

APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. ABBREVIATIONS

DABE = Directorate of Adult Basic Education

DLO = District Literacy Officer

DLOs = District Literacy Officers

DTA = Democratic Turnhalle Alliance

MEC = Ministry of Education and Culture

N.A. = National Assembly

NGO = Non-Governmental Organization

NGOs = Non-Governmental Organizations

NLP = Namibia Literacy Program

NLPN = National Literacy Program in Namibia

PLAN = People's Liberation Army of Namibia

RLO = Regional Literacy Organizer

SIDA = Swedish International Development Authority

SWAPO = South west African People's Organization

UDF = United Democratic Front

B. SHORTENED PHRASES

Curriculum Guide = A Curriculum Guide for the National Literacy Program in Namibia

(the) Guide = The Guide to the National Literacy Program in Namibia

Overall Evaluation = Findings of the Overall Evaluation of the National Literacy Program in Namibia

A Survey of Adult Learners = Adult Literacy in Ondangwa and Windhoek- A Survey of Literacy Skills and Education

APPENDIX 2 : RESEARCH PROGRAM

JUNE 1995

- Interview key people on the historical background of literacy in Namibia;
- Reading and recording means of verification on literacy efforts in Namibia;
- Selecting two Stage 1 classes;
- Conduct a survey on the groups;
- Ask them to write and read any material;
- Video recording the two classes;
- hold discussions with promoters, learners and the DLOs.

JULY 1995

- Ask them to read and write any material;
- Employ action research with one literacy class;
- Employ conventional research with the second class;
- Continue informal discussions with learners, promoters and DLOs;
- Interview learners and promoters;

AUGUST 1995

- Recording the learners performance on the final assessment;
- Concluding interviews with learners and promoters;

SEPTEMBER 1995

- Attend the International literacy week;
- 11 - 24 September 1995 to finalize my report;

OCTOBER 1995

- Observe the process of recruiting of literacy learners;
- Share my findings with Prof. George Urch (UMASS) during his visit to Namibia;

NOVEMBER 1995

- Incorporate the suggestion and advice of Prof. George Urch in my report;
- Share my findings with DABE (Head Office and Regional) staff;

DECEMBER 1995

- Adding suggestions and comments from the sharing meeting to my draft report;

JANUARY 1996

- Resuming my study in the USA and present my second draft report to my advisor Prof.

Robert "Bob" Miltz.

APRIL 1996

- Completing and editing of the document;
- Submitting the research project.

MAY 1996

- Presenting the project;

APPENDIX 3: LITERACY LEARNERS

A. OSHIKWANYAMA, STAGE 1 LITERACY CLASS LEARNERS

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Hinyangelwa Fillimon | 2. Hamana Fillipus |
| 3. Tuleingepo David (Shimuna) | 4. Gabriel Willihem |
| 5. Erastus Hifivali | 6. Willihem Shilongo |
| 7. Bonifasius Kaefas | 8. Fillipus Hinyangelwa |
| 9. Sam Pauls | 10. Usebiu David |
| 11. Tangeni Hilinganye | 12. Junias Kashuku |
| 13. Timoteus Petrus | 14. Petrus Hilinganye |
| 15. Mikael Mukwayu | 16. Lipuleni Frans |
| 17. Joel Faisicu | |

17 male + 0 female learners = 17 learners

B. KHOEKHOEGOWAB, STAGE 1 LITERACY CLASS

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Samuel Khom-Oabeb | 2. Hanna !Nawes |
| 3. Michael Dausab | 4. Ataliene !Haoses |
| 5. Thabita //Gowases | 6. Magdalena Enghono |
| 7. Hans !Aochamub | 8. Salonika !Uiras |
| 9. Efriede Gawanas | 10. Bertha //Garoes |
| 11. Wilhelmina Khom-Oabes | 12. Karoline Hoeses |
| 13. Sanna Xoagus | 14. Paulina Skrywer |
| 15. Esau //Garoeb | 16. Jakob Skrywer |
| 17. Moses Swartbooi | 18. Ellie Kock |

5 male + 13 female learners = 18

APPENDIX 4:
THE STRUCTURE OF DABE

TABLE A: HEAD OFFICE

Director				
Deputy Director				
General Service	Materials Development	Evaluation and Monitoring:	Training:	Research and Planning:
1 Control Officer	1 Senior Education Officer	1 Senior Education Officer	1 Senior Education Officer	1 Senior Education Officer
Various clerical staff members	5 Education Officers + 1 Media Officer	2 Education Officers	3 Education Officers	2 Education Officers

TABLE B: REGIONAL STRUCTURE

Regional Director

Deputy Director

Regional Co-ordinator

Regional Literacy Officer

Regional District Organisers

Promoters

learners

APPENDIX 6. STORY TELLING TECHNIQUE

"WHY LEARNERS ARE ILLITERATE" & "VOICES OF LEARNERS"

The researcher used this technique after creating a trust relationship with the learners. It is very important to discuss a topic like this in a "safe" environment. The following story was generated by the researcher to stimulate the learners to tell their life stories.

"One day my oldest sister received a letter from a man who was living in another town. This letter was written in Otjiherero, my home language. Since she could not read that language, she took the letter to my father to read it for her. She did not know that the man was proposing love to her in that letter. My father read everything and I could see how her face changed when he was reading certain lines. Since that day, my sister tried by all means to learn how to read her own letters."

APPENDIX 7. INTERVIEW

"HOW THEIR LIVES ARE AFFECTED BY LITERACY"

A. Informal/ Unstructured interviews

Posters, advertisements, pictures of politicians and newspaper articles were used to determine how they interpret written, public-informing materials. The researcher also used follow-up questions to find out what they do if they do not understand a message on e.g. a poster. Who inform them about events?

B. Formal Interview

1. How long have you been staying in Windhoek?

2. Are you employed?

(If yes) What kind of job do you do?

4. What kind of materials would you like to read?

5. Have you wrote or received a letter before?

(If yes, how many?)

6. What do your family and friends say when they heard that you attend a literacy class?

7. What motivated you to come to this class?

8. How do you find the class?/ What have you learnt so far?

9. What do you dislike about the class?

10. What do you miss in the program?